

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1 and 4-5 have been amended, Claims 2, 3, 13, and 19-23 have been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer, and new Claims 24-26 have been added; therefore, Claims 1, 4-12, 14-18, and 24-26 are pending. Applicant notes with appreciation the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter, namely, of Claims 3 and 14-16, provided they are re-written in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant has carefully considered the application in view of the Examiner's action, including the indication of allowable subject matter, and, in light of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, respectfully requests reconsideration and full allowance of all pending claims.

Claims 1, 2, 4-10, 12, 13, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,630,382 to Barbera et al. (hereinafter "*Barbera*"). Claim 11 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Barbera* in view U.S. Patent No. 5,430,621 to Raskas (hereinafter "*Raskas*"). Claim 17 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Barbera* in view U.S. Patent No. 6,557,498 to Smierciak et al. (hereinafter "*Smierciak*"). In response, Applicant has cancelled Claims 2 and 13, without prejudice or disclaimer, rendering the rejection thereof moot, and has amended independent Claim 1 such that it now clearly distinguishes and is patentable over the cited references.

Specifically, independent Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of Claim 3, without adding any new matter to the application as originally filed. Claim 1, as thus amended, is substantively identical to, and contains all the limitations that would have been present in, Claim 3 had Claim 3 been amended to comply with the Examiner's requirement for allowability, namely, that Claim 3 would be allowable if re-written in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claims (i.e., Claim 1) and any intervening claims (none). It is therefore respectfully submitted that independent Claim 1 complies with the Examiner's requirement for allowability, and thereby clearly and precisely distinguishes over *Barbera* in a patentable sense, and is thus allowable over *Barbera* and the remaining references of record. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by *Barbera* be withdrawn.

Claims 4-12 and 14-18 depend from and further limit independent Claim 1, in a patentable sense, and, for this reason and the reasons set forth above, are also deemed to be in condition for allowance. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the rejection of dependent Claims 4-12 and 14-18 be withdrawn, as well.

New Claims 24-26 incorporate the limitations of independent Claim 1 and, respectively, dependent Claims 14-16, which dependent claims the Examiner has indicated would be allowable if they were re-written in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim (i.e., Claim 1) and any intervening claims (none). New Claims 24-26, thus, add no new matter to the application as originally filed. Furthermore, it is respectfully submitted that new Claims 24-26 are also in condition for allowance.

Claims 12 and 13 stand objected to as being duplicates of each other. In response, Applicant has canceled Claim 13, rendering the rejection thereof moot.

Enclosed is a Petition for Extension of Time. Other than the fee required for said Petition, Applicant does not believe any other fees are due; however, in the event that any other fees are due, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any required fees due (other than issue fees), and to credit any overpayment made, in connection with the filing of this paper to Deposit Account No. 50-2032 of Scheef & Stone, L.L.P.

Applicant has now made an earnest attempt to place this application in condition for allowance. Therefore, with appreciative acknowledgement of Examiner Shaw's suggestion for allowability of Claims 3 and 14-16, Applicant respectfully requests, for the reasons set forth herein and for other reasons clearly apparent, full allowance of Claims 1, 4-12, 14-18, and 24-26 so that the application may be passed to issue.

APPL NO. 10/815,601
AMD'T. DATED MAY 1, 2006
REPLY TO OFFICE ACTION OF DEC. 30, 2005

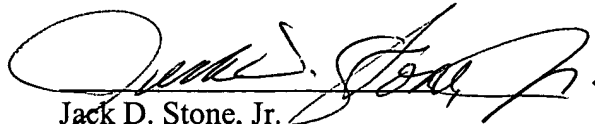


ATTY DKT NO. 1978.101

Should the Examiner have any questions or desire clarification of any sort, or deem that any further amendment is desirable to place this application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

SCHEEF & STONE, L.L.P.


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